

County of Dinwiddie

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W. KEVIN MASSENGILL

FOUNDED 1752

March 7, 2014

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 Twelfth Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

RE: Expression of Interest
Broadband Experiment
Docket #: 10-90

Dear Secretary Dortch:

This letter is to express Dinwiddie County, Virginia's interest in the Rural Broadband Experiment referenced above. While, Dinwiddie does not have a project to propose at this point, we do have a significant need for high-speed Internet that reaches all areas of our County. We respectfully request that the FCC consider Dinwiddie's need and motivation to plan while determining recipients of funding for this competition.

Background

Dinwiddie County, Virginia is a rural community located in south central Virginia. Our County is adjacent to the City of Petersburg and approximately 30 miles south of Richmond. While an overall population of 28,001 doesn't initially seem rural, the fact that Dinwiddie County covers 507 square miles makes more sense. In fact, 90% of Dinwiddie County is considered "extremely rural" based on eligible Census tracts identified through this competition.

Access to the Internet is extremely important to Dinwiddie citizens. As technology evolves, Dinwiddie County Public Schools is working hard to ensure that our students can be competitive with students across the state and nation. A critical

component of their efforts relates to distance learning opportunities. We are in a prime position to partner with local colleges and universities to offer college-level/dual enrollment courses to students. Internet access with adequate speed and bandwidth is crucial. Additionally, Dinwiddie County Public Schools have deployed a variety of portable devices (i.e., laptops and tablets) for student use outside of the classroom. Many students are unable to use these devices to their full potential from home due to lack of adequate internet connectivity. Major providers in our area (Comcast, Verizon and Hughesnet) have been approached regarding expansion of services to our area but declined saying it would honestly not be worth their investment.

Dinwiddie County Government relies heavily on internet access. This is particularly true in public safety sectors. In the Sheriff's Department alone, there is a Mobile Data Terminals (MDT's) assigned to officer's vehicle. The deployment of MDT's has been gradual over time and continues to grow each fiscal year. MDT technology allows officers to complete reports, conduct background checks and access records from the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) directly from their vehicle. This has greatly enhanced efficiency and increased the safety of these officers. MDT's also allow dispatchers to pinpoint the location of each unit as it moves throughout the County. Our appreciation of this feature was reinforced recently when officers from neighboring localities were reported "missing" after dispatchers could not make radio contact. While we use this technology, it is at a significant cost. Each MDT contains a "MiFi" device that provides Internet Access remotely. Even with a multi-unit discount, Dinwiddie County pays \$50 per month, per unit. MDT's will soon be deployed in all Fire and Emergency Management (EMS) vehicles and apparatus. Again, each will require a \$50/month MiFi device. Currently this is our only option, however over time it is quite costly. Eventually, Dinwiddie plans to have MDT's installed in all County-owned vehicles, to include public safety, County administration, school buses etc... This is much-needed to enhance safety but also comes at great cost to the County.

Geographic Territory:

Despite being so close to areas with full access to the Internet (Richmond/Petersburg Metro area), there are 6,163 homes located in the 90% of "extremely rural" Dinwiddie County without access. Census blocks identified for this project are: 51053840100, 51053840200, and 51053840600. Despite the "dark fiber" pipe that runs along Route 1 through these areas of the County, Dinwiddie's vast land expanse prohibits "line of sight" technology. In these areas, where even cell phone coverage is inconsistent, citizens must rely on dial up or "MyFi" technology to access the Internet. Dial up is antiquated and extremely slow, and the data caps and cost of MiFi technology makes this a less than attractive option for County residents seeking internet access.

List of Anchor Institutions:

Schools:	Dinwiddie Elementary (K-5), Southside Elementary (K-5), Sunnyside Elementary (K-5), Midway Elementary (K-5), Sutherland Elementary (K-5), Dinwiddie County Middle School (grades 6-8), Dinwiddie County High School (grades 9-12).
Libraries:	Appomattox Regional Library System (ARLS) Dinwiddie Branch McKenney Branch Rohoic Branch
Healthcare:	Dinwiddie Health Department, Central State Hospital, Dinwiddie Medical Center, Local dentists (2)
County Government:	County Administration, Sheriff's Department, Public Safety, Fire & EMS, Volunteer Fire Departments (5), Public Works, Animal Control, Cooperative Extension Services, County Courthouse, Department of Social Services
Community Facilities:	Eastside Community Enhancement Center, Dinwiddie County Sports Complex
Businesses:	Amazon Fulfilment Center, WalMart Distribution Center, Gerda Ameristeele
Other:	Dinwiddie County Airport, Dinwiddie Water Authority

Proposed Technology:

Dinwiddie County would like an opportunity to explore "White Space" as a broadband option. White space is defined as the unused frequencies allocated to broadcasting services in particular areas of the country. White space could be used to provide wireless broadband internet access, similar to Wi-Fi but over much longer distances, to mobile devices such as tablets and phones. This technology seems well-suited for conditions in Dinwiddie County.

While there is no plan in place, Dinwiddie has already begun discussion with neighboring localities (Prince George and Surry Counties) regarding a regional approach to broadband. Ideally, we will also work with Brunswick, Greenville and

Nottoway Counties to develop a true regional consortium to address this common need.

White space technology is currently being piloted on Ft. Pickett, a military base in neighboring Blackstone, VA. This technology is being managed by Wireless Internet Service Provider Associates (WISPA). Dinwiddie County has contacted the Ft. Pickett project manager at WISPA in an effort to gain a better understanding of how white space is being utilized on base.

Dinwiddie County and partnering localities need to conduct a regional broadband assessment to determine the most practical and effective manner in which to provide internet access to citizens, businesses, schools and local government. Once this is complete, a regional authority will be appointed to develop and implement the plan that will make broadband a reality.

Local Government Participation and Support for Project:

While Dinwiddie County will fully participate and support this project, it is important to note that Dinwiddie County does not desire to become an Internet Service Provider (ISP). Our goal is to create an environment conducive to outside providers offering service to our residents. Funding has been proposed in Dinwiddie's FY 2015 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) in the amount of \$75,000 to support this project. The Board of Supervisors will vote on the budget on April 29, 2014. The Board has named broadband as a priority and all indications are that they will support this CIP request.

Existing Providers:

While there are internet service providers in our area, none are willing or able to expand services to cover all areas of Dinwiddie County. WISP is piloting service to Ft. Pickett via white space technology and has expressed an interest in consulting with Dinwiddie County on a regional expansion.

Project Timeline:

We anticipate a phase approach to this multi-jurisdictional project with an estimated timeline of 18-36 months.

Scalability:

In order to determine the scalability of this project, the comprehensive broadband assessment must be completed.

Total Project Cost:

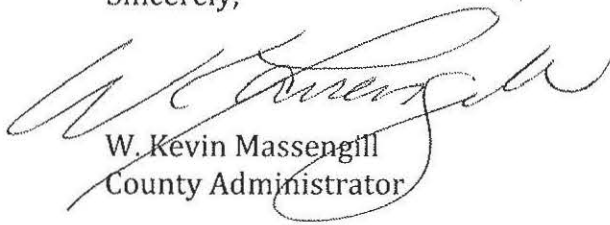
At this point in the process, we are unable to assign a dollar amount to the project, however are certain that the total cost will exceed Dinwiddie combined allocation by Census tract.

Dinwiddie County has determined that an assessment for our County alone will cost \$75,000. Prince George and Surry Counties have completed broadband assessments and once Dinwiddie's is complete we will be able to compare, contrast and develop a plan of action, which will lead to the development of an overall project budget.

We appreciate your consideration of our Expression of Interest for Rural Broadband funding. While we do not have a detailed project to propose at this point, we would greatly appreciate an opportunity to complete the initial broadband assessment, expand to include a regional approach and craft a detailed plan for your consideration.

Again, we appreciate your support of rural communities and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



W. Kevin Massengill
County Administrator